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The New England
Modern Language Association

AN
HISTORICAL SKETCH

BY
PROFESSOR J. GEDDES, Jr.
of Boston University

REPRINTED FROM "BOSTONIA," JANUARY, 1907

PUBLISHED FOR THE ASSOCIATION BY
D. C. HEATH & CO.
120 BOYLSTON STREET, BOSTON, MASS.
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THE NEW ENGLAND MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION.

Professor James Geddes, Jr., Ph.D.

I. INITIAL STAGE.

THE New England Modern Language Association was organized on Dec. 12, 1903. The idea of starting such an organization had been in the minds of several educators for some time. It was, however, reserved for Mr. Maro S. Brooks, of the Brookline High School, and Mr. William B. Snow, of the English High School, Boston, to initiate and to bring the movement into successful operation. Perhaps these two teachers foresaw the far-reaching results of the movement; perhaps they have been building better than they knew. Already the influence of the Association in the teaching of modern languages is widely felt, and it gives promise of being a powerful agency in modifying the relations of secondary schools and colleges. The wonder is that such an Association was not started before.

When an undertaking proves to be remarkably successful, its origin becomes immediately a matter of interest. The first call, which brought together at the Girl's Latin School, Boston, about one hundred and seventy-five persons interested in the teaching of modern foreign languages, read as follows:

BOSTON, Dec. 1, 1903.

All persons interested in the teaching of modern languages are invited to meet at the Girls' Latin School, Copley Square, Boston, on Saturday, December 12, at 10.30 A.M., for the purpose of forming an Association.

There will be addresses by representatives of leading colleges and secondary schools, upon the need of such an organization and its purposes. It is requested that notice of this meeting be extended to all who might be interested.

MARO S. BROOKS, Brookline High School
MARY S. BRUCE, Newton High School
ISABELLE C. DEWEY, Lynn English High School
JOSIAH M. KAGAN, Roxbury High School
JONATHAN LEONARD, Somerville English High School
JANE A. McLELLAN, Dorchester High School
ANNIE L. MERRITT, Melrose High School
WILLIAM B. SNOW, English High School

Mr. Brooks presided and Mr. Snow acted as secretary. After a discussion of nearly two hours, during which numerous phases of the entire modern-language field were touched upon, the new society was organized.

The aims of the organization are of a rather more practical nature

than those covered by our National, Central, or Pacific Coast Associations. The intention is to bridge over — partly, at least — the gap in the teaching of modern languages between the colleges and the secondary schools. Although it was evident that French and German were the subjects particularly contemplated, nevertheless the assembly was thoroughly representative of modern languages in general. Teachers of English, Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese were present and fully alive to the interests of their specialty. The representatives of three different spheres of modern-language activity came not only from various and distant parts of Massachusetts, but from the adjoining States as well. Numerous letters in response to the call were brought to the attention of the audience by the chairman. Among these replies, from those unable to be present, words of encouragement were received from President Eliot, of Harvard University; President Pritchett, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Professor Grandgent, of Harvard; and Professor Fay, of Tufts.

II. AIMS AND PROMOTERS OF THE ASSOCIATION.

Dr. H. C. Bierwirth, of the German Department of Harvard, was the first speaker. He strongly advocated closer relations between college and secondary-school teachers. He thought that the results obtained by many students now in his classes were hardly as good, on the whole, as those obtained by many students a few years ago. He attributed the falling-off of successful results partly to a lack of sufficient knowledge of English grammar. It seemed to him only proper that the attention of the teachers of English should be drawn to this deficiency. In this way the teaching of the principles of elementary German grammar might be considerably lightened. Dr. Bierwirth's ideas met with general approval, and teachers of English who feel interested to join the Association may be sure of an especially cordial welcome.

Mr. Snow, of the English High School, Boston, emphasized the need of differentiating the aims of the Association from those of existing organizations for promoting language study. Meetings should be held at least once a month. They should be informal and give opportunity for every possible expression of opinion on topics relating to the modern languages themselves, as well as to the teaching of the latter. No set papers on learned subjects should be read at any meeting, monthly or annual; rather, a free interchange in regard to one's own observations in teaching the languages, or on the preparation of text-books, or upon recent events in connection with the literature of the subject. To this end, possibly central quarters

might be established in Boston which should contain recent books and periodicals bearing upon educational questions relating to the study of language and literature in some of their many forms. It not infrequently happened that valuable contributions on these topics were not to be had, at the best libraries, until long after their publication. Much information could be secured in this way by those unable to profit by the advantages of travel. In time, branches of the central headquarters might be established elsewhere, somewhat on the principle of circulating libraries. Some such system would naturally encourage the secondary teachers to do original work, such as investigations of methods abroad, or some special research along the lines of their particular activity.

Mr. Snow's ideas were still further developed by Professors Vogel and Rambeau, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Remarks of an encouraging nature, which reflected well the enthusiasm of those present, were made by Mr. F. D. Aldrich, of Worcester Academy; Mr. J. S. Ford, of Phillips Exeter Academy; Mrs. Isabelle C. Dewey, of the Lynn English High School; Miss Clapp, of the Medford High School; Miss Irene C. Hines, of the Dedham High School; Miss Elizabeth Hough, of the Girls' High School, Boston; Miss Jane A. McLellan, of the Dorchester High School; Mrs. Burton and Miss M. A. Bachelder, of the Cambridge Latin School; Miss M. P. Whitney, of the New Haven High School; Professor C. A. A. Currier, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Mr. L. W. Arnold, of Springfield; Mr. S. Willard Clary, of the modern-language text-book department of a leading publishing-house in Boston; and by Professors Josselyn and Geddes of Boston University.

III. ORGANIZATION.

The assembly then voted article by article on the following constitution, a draft of which had previously been presented to the members:

ARTICLE I. *Name*.— This organization shall be called the New England Modern Language Association.

ARTICLE II. *Members*.— Any person interested in the teaching of modern languages, and approved by the Board of Directors, may become a member by the payment of two dollars, and may continue a member by the payment of the same amount each year. (By an amendment, shortly after, this fee was reduced to one dollar.)

ARTICLE III. *Officers*.— The officers of this Association shall be a President, three Vice-Presidents, a Secretary, and a Treasurer, who, with five other members, shall constitute a Board of Directors which shall have charge of all the affairs of the Association. (By a subsequent amendment, the Vice-Presidents were increased to

five, the *five* other members to *nine*, a Librarian added, and provision made for changing, to a certain extent, the personnel annually.)

The officers shall be elected by ballot at the annual meeting. The officers for the first year shall be elected immediately upon the adoption of the constitution.

ARTICLE IV. *Meetings*.— The annual meeting shall be held on the second Saturday of May.

Other meetings may be called by the Board of Directors at any time between the months of October and May.

ARTICLE V. *Amendments*.— This constitution may be amended at any annual meeting, provided written notice of such amendment has been given by the Board of Directors to each member of the Association.

The following officers were then elected: President, Wm. B. Snow; Vice-Presidents, Dr. H. C. Bierwirth, Professor J. Geddes, Jr., Professor Frank Vogel; Secretary, M. S. Brooks; Treasurer, Miss Jane A. McLellan; Board of Directors, J. S. Ford, L. W. Arnold, Miss Sarah A. Clapp, Miss Marian P. Whitney, Miss Elizabeth Souther.

IV. WHAT SHALL THE ASSOCIATION DO AND HOW SHALL IT DO IT?

Several meetings of the officers and Board of Directors were held early in January, 1904, at Boston University, for the purpose of answering in the best manner possible this question. Finally, President Snow made a draft of a plan which is now being carried into successful operation. It is as follows:

I. Objects of the Association: To promote friendly relations among teachers of modern languages; to conduct investigations and answer questions in the field of modern-language teaching.

II. Business of the Association: (a) to ask questions; (b) to study and answer them; (c) to tabulate, record, and file results.

(a) Asking questions: Every member of the Association is requested to propose topics for investigation, and to ask questions suggested by his study or teaching. These should be sent to the secretary of the Association, whenever they arise, and will be referred by the board to some member or group of members for consideration. Such topics may be: (1) Information that will help members going abroad to study; summer-courses; teachers; schools; boarding-places, etc. (2) Provision for leave of absence and stipends to enable teachers to go abroad for study. (3) Would the colleges prefer intensive rather than extensive teaching in the secondary schools? That is, would they prefer Freshmen with a limited

vocabulary, but with ear, eye, and tongue trained to speed and accuracy in simple constructions, at the expense of extended vocabulary and the power to translate texts difficult in form or thought? Would they make this possible by giving an oral examination in place of the more difficult translation and composition? (4) Do the technical schools wish the secondary schools to read science in their modern-language courses? (5) Modern-language texts; their suitability to different classes; their combination into well-rounded courses. (6) Modern-language teaching in Germany, France, England.

(b) Studying and answering the questions. For geographical reasons it will be found advantageous for the members to be organized into groups, each group with its own officers, regular place and time of meeting, subjects for study and discussion, papers, lectures, etc. The secretary of the Association should be kept informed of the work of each group. Any member of the Association shall be welcome at any meeting of any group. The chief lines of work to be carried out shall be decided upon by the group-leader in consultation with the Board of Directors. Each group shall provide the place for its own meetings at its own expense. Periodicals and books desired for the work of any group are to be ordered by the leader of the group, of the treasurer, who on the approval of the board will procure them. Such publications are to be the property of the Association. They are to be properly labeled by the librarian of the group first receiving them, and to be circulated from group to group as the board may direct. The Association shall have a librarian who will keep a catalog of all such publications and a record of the group having them at any time in its possession. The librarian of each group is to know what member has the publication in question.

(c) Recording results: The results of all investigations are to be recorded on cards of convenient and uniform size, arranged and kept in suitable cases by the librarian. These cases and cards are to be purchased by the treasurer with the approval of the board, and cards are to be furnished each group. These files will, it is hoped, furnish members with: (1) A bibliography of books and articles treating of any question of interest to teachers of modern languages, each card bearing a brief signed résumé of the book or article in question. (Cf. the treatment in Breyman's *Reformliteratur*.) (2) A treasury of information concerning residence and study abroad. (3) A synopsis of the proceedings of the Association and the results of its discussions and investigations.

V. FRIENDLY RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ROMANCE DEPARTMENT AND THE ASSOCIATION.

After the above outline of work to be done was planned, Dr. Josselyn, of Boston University, was appointed librarian of the Association. He subscribed, in the name of the organization, for *Die Neueren Sprachen*, *Zeitschrift für Französischen und Englischen Unterricht*, *Modern Language Notes*, *Modern Language Quarterly*, and *Revue de l'Enseignement des Langues Modernes*. These publications are sent in rotation to the various groups.

It then became a question where to house these publications. The Romance Department of Boston University had long desired suitable quarters for a Romance library and for seminar-work. The matter was laid before President Huntington, and it was finally decided to give the spacious room on Ashburton Place just over the Philological library, where the Young Men's Christian Association held its weekly meetings, to the Romance Department to be used as a library and seminar. With the consent of the authorities, the Romance Department offered to share its commodious quarters with the New England Modern Language Association for library purposes. The Association gladly accepted. The room was fitted up with suitable shelves for the use of the department and of the New England Modern Language Association. The principal firms publishing foreign texts were consulted by the librarian or reached by letter. These firms were, in New York, American Book Company; Appleton; Holt; Jenkins; Macmillan; in Boston, Allyn and Bacon; Ginn; Heath; Maynard, Small; Silver, Burdett; in Chicago, Scott, Foresman. The results obtained surpassed even sanguine hopes. All of these firms sent quite a complete line of their publications, principally French and German, although also some Spanish and Italian texts. The Association is now the possessor of nearly one thousand modern-language texts, a unique collection, and undoubtedly one of the finest of the kind in the country. Several students from those pursuing Romance languages are selected annually to perform the duties of assistant librarians. Thanks to the work of these students, under the able supervision of Professor Josselyn, these books have been stamped, labeled, and classified, and are now arranged on the shelves. They have been furnished with the Association bookplate, and the work of cataloging is going rapidly forward. The books on Romance subjects have been removed from the College library to the stack reserved for them in the Romance Department library. The Bos-

ton University students may well consider themselves fortunate in that this fine special library of modern texts and reference-books is at their command on payment of the department membership fee of fifty cents a year. Within the Association five groups have already been formed: the Boston group, previously referred to, comprising the territory within a radius of some thirty miles of Boston; the Western Massachusetts group, embracing a portion of the Connecticut Valley, with Springfield as the centre; the Connecticut group, which takes in the region in the vicinity of the two centres, Hartford and New Haven; the Worcester group, comprising the territory within a convenient radius of the city of Worcester; and the Rhode Island group, comprising a like territory around Providence as its centre. Each group bears about the same relation to the Association that the States bear to the federal government. Each group has a chairman, secretary, treasurer, librarian, committee on new text-books, a committee on advantages to teachers, and a correspondent for each of the other groups. The annual meeting of the Association has been held at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Frequent meetings of the Boston group are held in Boston University; of the other groups, at some centre convenient for the members of the particular group.

The friendliest relations exist between this Association and the Modern Language Association of the State of Maine. On the occasion of the annual meeting, on or about the same date, of the two bodies, each is in the habit of sending a telegram conveying good wishes to the other. Indeed, for some time, negotiations have been pending with the object in view of uniting the two Associations. Thus practically four of the New England States are united in a common bond for the attainment of the same object,—improvement all along the line in the teaching of modern languages.

It is fair to state that the birth of the New England Modern Language Association has materially aided in the development of the Romance Department of Boston University. The department, as explained, has endeavored in return to show its appreciation for the benefit received by placing what advantages it possesses at the disposal of the members of the Association. That it has been able to do so has been made possible through the coöperation and kindly effort of the educator who, at the first meeting of the Boston group, in the college chapel, extended to the Association the hospitality of the University, President W. E. Huntington.

Everything of importance which now takes place in the work of the Association will be found in the Publications issued annually, in an attract-

ive large octavo form, by the firm of Ginn & Co. The first Annual Report, issued in 1905, under the presidency of Mr. Snow, contains a full account of the second annual meeting of the Association. The members on this occasion gave attention to "The German Reform Method and Its Adaptability to American Conditions." Dr. Jules Sachs, of Columbia University, read a paper on this subject, and an interesting debate, in which many members had a share, followed. At this time the list of members showed a total of two hundred and forty-five. The second annual meeting, in 1906, under the presidency of Professor Fay, of Tufts College, was devoted to a discussion of "Entrance Examination Papers in French and German." The second Annual Report contains twenty-eight entrance-examination papers in elementary and advanced French and German prepared by college and preparatory teachers. The variety shown by these specimens is interesting and continually furnishes fruitful material for discussion.

At the present time, December, 1906, there are three hundred and twenty-five members enrolled, with indications that before the May meeting in 1907 this number will be increased to at least three hundred and fifty. Dr. William C. Collar is for the current year the honored president of the Association. The chairmen of the various groups are as follows: Boston, Professor M.L. Perrin; Worcester, Professor S. P. Capen; Western Massachusetts, Mr. Julius Tuckerman; Connecticut, Miss Mary A. Sawtelle; Rhode Island, Professor A. Clinton Crowell.

An excellent feature of the organization is that the officers, as well as the members, are drawn from the preparatory schools and the colleges. The personnel of the governing boards is largely changed annually in order to give as many as possible the widest advantage. A fine opportunity is thus offered for acquaintanceship, a free interchange of ideas, and a better understanding between high-school and college teachers. Indeed, the social advantages are among the pleasantest and the most profitable.

Additions from all classes of teachers interested in the work of the Association are most cordially welcomed. By extending the sphere of activity as widely as possible, it is hoped to increase still farther the usefulness of the Association.

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Storr's Hints on French Syntax. With exercises. 30 cts.
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Houghton's French by Reading. \$1.12.
Hotchkiss' Le Primer Livre de Français. Boards. 35 cts.
Fontaine's Livre de Lecture et de Conversation. 90 cts.
Fontaine's Lectures Courantes. Can follow the above. \$1.00.
Prisoners of the Temple (Guerber). For French Composition. 25 cts.
Bruce's Dictées Françaises. 30 cts.
Story of Cupid and Psyche (Guerber). For French Composition. 18 cts.
Lyon and Larpent's Primary French Translation Book. 60 cts.
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